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Cozy Cottage Redo

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CHALLENGE



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On rampant vines and inspiring DIYers

Don't know about you, but sometimes I think home-improvement projects read a little more like the time and money sinkers than some sci-fi or science-fiction vine.

Or maybe I'm just a little bit of a vine problem. There's the Virginia creeper that doesn't creep so much as it crawls—usually across a row of bushes, up a nearby tree, and into the neighbor's yard. That's my hunching it out with the creeper in the photo, there. And then there's the honeysuckle, which is often the worst gift of a fragrant yard a long with the tart price of a hearted state of brown, dead branches that I each spring need to be tossed out the creeper and the ivy. Yeah, the ivy is a vine problem. No. 3. That was planted to grow up the fence but consistently creeps the climb and instead tries to break across the garden bed and grow paths toward the house. Fortunately, I move some what faster than it does, so I manage to whack it back before it gets into my sleep.

Lucky for you, that worry can be avoided by checking out one of my favorite stories in this issue, "Quick Cleaners," on page 20. I could have worried so much had I read it before planting, but there's enough in it to fix my problems. You know, a bit of vine-detection.

Meanwhile, my other favorite story in this issue takes us back to home-improvement projects—old how things come full circle around here, huh? It's about like we're playing a game. Which we are. It's called the *The Old House* DIY/Dave Challenge. In it, five teams of *TOH* staffers were tasked with turning a collection of modern projects into a couple of newly bought items, and whose we tools they needed to do it. And some of the DIY. The results impressed us enough to enter the challenge to you. Can you improve on Ed and Allan's window box? Or Mike and Lyndsey's kitchen island? Or the under-the-stair Bob and his daughter, Ivy (in relation to my ivy, huh)? Or, better, can you create an entirely different—and cooler—project from what you're getting around the house? Give it a shot, snap it with your phone, and upload it to social media with the hashtag #TOYDare. We'll feature the best of them in *TOH*'s end, hopefully, discover a couple of readers so talented that they become regular contributors to *The Old House*. And there's no fiction—science or otherwise.

Scott Chantawee

SCOTT CHANTAWEE, EDITOR
scott@theoldhouse.com

*Anti-ivory? You can send your project via e-mail instead to DIYDare@theoldhouse.com. Good luck!

Letter FROM THE OLD HOUSE



TOH's brilliant Allan Adams and Ed Virginia do the *TOH* Dave

ANOTHER
WAY TO WIN!

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Reader mail



How to reach us

E-mail the editors at TOLH_letters@thisoldhouse.com or write to This Old House magazine, 2201 Jersey Street, New York, NY 10001.

*Include your full name, address, and phone number. Published letters are edited for clarity and length.

ONE THING'S CERTAIN: *This Old House* readers—and editors—love to geek out over their house's history and features. The January/February 2016 issue prompted a number of folks to pull out their brag books and share stories and photos of architectural details that recall ones seen in the magazine.

Long-ago update

I have to smile at how much the front stairs on the cover of your January/February 2006 issue look like mine (right). Still makes



me think about the craftsman who built it. They replaced the original staircase with this more "modern," fanciful one in about 1900.

—BARBARA FUCHS, NEW HAVEN, CONN.

Plaster detail connection?

In his January/February Letter from This Old House, editor Scott Oreckman is painting at a lovely pair of plaster ornaments. They are exactly the same as ones I restored (below) in a house in Savannah, in 2003. The Bentley House was built in 1843 by architect John S. Norris, who was from New York. He designed some of Savannah's most romantic-style houses. I'm curious to



know the peer Scott's house was built and who the architect was.

—JAMES HUNTER, BUCKLEY, ILL.

SCOTT REPLIES: My house—a far kinder place than the amazing one you've restored—was built in 1870, according to tax records. Many homes in the neighborhood that were built around that time have the same crown detail. I've been told that builders would look-order such material out of catalogs from places like Chicago's Ornamental. I'm afraid I don't know the architect's name, but I think you've just started me off on a lot of a detective hunt.

Old-time ingenuity

Your January/February Design Insider column, "Details Make the Difference," brought to mind an inspiration I got from the restoration of the Sag Harbor Custom House, decades ago, when a mystery was solved: There had been a large grandfather clock in the house, but no one could figure out where the clock belonged, as the ceilings were too low to accommodate it. During the work, the removal of the sewer ceiling revealed a scapolite out cavity in the ceiling—where the clock once stood.

When my husband later had his family's clock, we had the same problem, but we already knew the solution—so we scooped out enough in the ceiling to make room for the clock to stand tall [below].

—CAROL GLENNER, SAG HARBOR, N.Y.



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DECK RAIL TRIM SIDING MOULDING PORCH PAVERS

To find articles from the January/February issue, go to thisoldhouse.com/janfeb2016.

Checklist

APRIL 2016

Easy ways to improve your home right now

6 FAST FIXES

1. **Inspect patches:** Check floorboards for signs of rot or damage, looking underneath where rot will start—if the area is accessible.



2. **Organize the attic:** Before summer heat sets in, remove items that can be sold or a yard sale or donated, and make an inventory of what's left.

3. **Head off spring allergies:** Prevent pollen and other allergens from sneaking deeper into your home by placing air purifiers at entryways.

4. **Check for termites:** Look for tiny red wood-boring tubes of mud, or discarded winged adults your home's foundation inside and out.

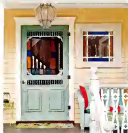
5. **Reinsulate around tubes:** Ensure that no water is seeping behind bathroom tiles by removing old caulk and replacing with fresh stuff formulated for tubs and tile.

6. **Refresh old potting soil:** If last year's potting mix went bad, you can reuse the soil this year. Remove old foliage or roots and flush it up with 25 percent perlite or compost.

Silence

slamming doors

If your storm or screen door is swinging shut with a bang, it's usually simple to fix. Look for the adjustment screw attached to the pin-and-roller cylinder—the tube-shaped piston that regulates the door's closing speed—and give it a few turns to the right to slow the door's closing. Need to speed up a door that's taking too long to close? Turn the same screw to the left to loosen it and give the door a boost.



TOH TIP

Plant a tree on April 29

Happy Arbor Day! To get in the spirit, consider planting a fast-growing flowering species that will offer up plenty of color. In hot, sunny climates, try a crape myrtle, in cooler zones, opt for a purple-leaved redbud. Both can grow up to 25 feet per year. Choose a planting site large enough to accommodate full sun and canopy growth.



Spruce up shutters

With temps steadily above 50°F, it's the perfect time to take on exterior painting projects, such as

refreshing up painted shutters. Don't be tempted to touch them up in place—remove them first, and you'll be able to inspect paint on horizontal edges for cracking and blistering and see any hidden damage to your siding, too. Be sure to paint all sides and edges of the shutters to protect against moisture.



Disinfect workspaces

Get your home office in top shape before things heat this month. Unplug your computer, keyboard, mouse, and phone, and remove any batteries. Blow dust from keyboards with compressed air. Then use a disinfectant alcohol to tackle germs on the surfaces of these devices, taking care to avoid screens.

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INSIDE GARDEN GEAR LAWN TIPS DIY DECOR CLEANING HACKS MORE



Stair-riser plant stand

How to create a container garden that fits atop above the rest? Build a plant riser using stair parts. To create this cheery display, we started with two three-step risers, using 1x6s to create back legs. For each tier, we used two more 1x6s, working near to leave a bit of drainage space between them. Two stacked 1x2s (hidden from view) form a charming crisscross back, and a coat of parrot yellow exterior paint (Behr's ColorSonic) makes the whole piece sing.

The final step: filling it with pots large and small so you can watch your garden grow to new heights.



STAIR RISER: JENNIFER GUNTER; PLANTS: JEFFREY M. HARRIS



Cut-above gloves

Not all gardening gloves are created equal. Here, three stand out to help you finish a flower-lamp.

1 Coverage to the max

Red gloves: \$30, [amazon.com](#)

Durable, lightweight synthetic-made gloves that protect your fingers, making them ideal for pruning roses and other prickly shrubs.

2 Soft yet supportive

Yellow gloves: \$12, [amazon.com](#)

Designed for plenty of cushioning for fingers and palms and helps reduce fatigue while using high-speed machines, the gloves are of good value. The stretchy nylon Lycra knit hand back offer sensory relief, making them suitable for working, pruning, and planting, too.

3 Nimble-fingered

Purple gloves: \$10, [amazon.com](#)

These gloves are designed to be flexible, water-resistant, and resistant to a light weight glove that's well suited to delicate and light planting. The rubbery texture also helps with gripping and handling.

Super seeds

Seed companies are always developing grasses that promise greater resistance and less maintenance. To find the best, we consulted the experts at the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program. Here's what you should be planting in your area — **BY REGION**.



region 1

COCHISE
Tall fescue

Along with a dark green color, Cochise packs hefty, which creates a dense lawn. This grass is designed to grow slowly, so it requires less frequent mowing than other cultivars. About \$20 per pound, [seedsuperstore.com](#)



region 4

LATITUDE 36
Bermuda grass

This dark-green grass is more cold-hardy than other Bermuda grasses, giving it a wider growing zone. It resists fungal diseases and winterkill, and grows only 1/2 inch a year. \$17 per pound, [seedsuperstore.com](#)



region 2

ZENITH
Zoysia grass

This zoysia grows in nearly any condition, from full sun to partial shade. The dark-green blades have a medium texture that's comfy under foot and can withstand drought. \$25 per pound, [seedsuperstore.com](#)



region 5

SUNDANCE
Buffalo grass

Native buffalo grass gets overmown with weeds when cut short, but Sundance can handle frequent mowing and grows only 1/2 inch a year. \$17 per pound, [seedsuperstore.com](#)



region 3

CAPTIVA
St. Augustine grass

It's as easy to find as spider mites, but Captiva is as soft as sand or plush, is darker than other varieties and has excellent heat, shade, and drought tolerance. It can also grow in both sand and clay. \$40 per square foot for seed.



region 6

EVERGLADE
Paspalum

Quickly becoming a dark green, this seed has excellent disease resistance and can withstand drought and foot traffic in summer and snow machine spring. \$26.50 per pound, [seedsuperstore.com](#)

Catalog looks for less

This month, we were inspired by a number of mail-order home decor pieces with an industrial wood-and-metal vibe — so inspired, in fact, that we thought we'd create something similar ourselves. Here, the products of our labor: all a breeze to make, and each costing \$25 or less.



4 Reclaimed-wood shelf

Aged beam wood becomes a functional floor piece with this rough-hewn storage piece. We made brackets from 1/2-inch steel pipe fittings, including each nipple finished with caps, and flanges for mounting — all attached with screws for a rustic look. To secure it, we screwed the flange into the wood from behind, then attached the entire piece using drywall anchors.

CATALOG PRICE: about \$200

DIY PRICE: \$24, plus paint



4 Handsome note board

Reminiscent of a front door, this board with this look would place it in a rustic home. To make it, we used an 18-by-18-inch piece of pine common board, rounding the corners with a jigsaw and finishing the edges with veneer tape. After staining it a warm maple tone, we attached clips (80 for two, [amazon.com](#)) and drilled holes for securing the board to the wall.

CATALOG PRICE: about \$40

DIY PRICE: \$15, plus stain

4 Vintage industrial candleholder

Distressed wood and steel pipe lend some both to dairy bar lights. To give our new piece of 2-by-2 cedar an aged look, we roughed it up with hammers, chains, and a sander, then stained it a dark walnut tone before drilling 1/4-inch holes with a router bit. A rubber mallet helped us hammer the candlepipe rings into place. The grooves placed in the caps helped create a level surface for the tea lights. All that was left to do was to look in the glow of our handmade decor.

CATALOG PRICE: \$50

DIY PRICE: \$25, plus stain





Speed-clean with these pro tips

While there's no magic potion for making your house immaculate in minutes, years on the job give pro house cleaners an edge when it comes to tackling dirt, dust, and grime. Here, experts share some of their best time-saving tricks. —JULIA KORN

ASSEMBLE A KIT Keeping cleaners and tools together makes it easy to pick up and go. Fill a heavy-duty plastic bag with your go-to cleaners. "I says Melissa Horner, chief cleaning officer at MaidPro. "One of the reasons cleaning is so overwhelming is because people run all over the house looking for what they need."

USE DOUBLE-DUTY ITEMS An old-fashioned cloth is an efficient cleaning agent. For Meg Roberts, president of Myly Maid, most items have to serve multiple purposes to keep a spot in her cleaning closet. Dryer sheets are surprisingly versatile, she says. Roberts uses them to clean grout, shower doors, to dust baseboards and moldings, and as dryer liners at the bottom of trash bins. Other pros recommend just the same: having an all-purpose cleaner for hard surfaces, a scrubbing cream cleanser for bathtubs, and white vinegar for glass.

LET CLEANSERS DO THE HEAVY LIFTING "I can't stress enough that cleansers need to soak before you try to scrub," says Horner. "Most need a minimum of

60 seconds, but almost any cleaner becomes more effective if you leave it on for 10 to 15 minutes."

DON'T CONFUSE ORGANIZING WITH CLEANING Horner says homeowners frequently get overwhelmed because they get distracted trying to put everything back in its rightful place. "Instead of trying to put things away, stick a laundry basket in the corner of the room and fill it with objects that don't belong as you encounter them," she says. "Then when it's time for a break, you can pick up the basket and put everything back at once."

HAVE A SYSTEM MaidPro follows what the firm calls the cleaning spiral. "Start with your least-used hand and pick a corner of the room. Work your way around the room, starting at the ceiling, then moving down to cabinets or hutchies, then counters or tables, before ending at the floor," Horner says. With this method, not only do you ensure that you're hitting every spot—you're also guaranteeing that as you hit high surfaces, dust and grime won't fall onto areas you've already cleaned.

Fixes for a popcorn ceiling

Want to ditch a dated "cottage cheese" finish on your ceiling? Before starting work, be sure to turn any gas- or oil-burning devices for at least 15 minutes to test for carbon monoxide. If the tests are positive, don't touch it—your next certified asbestos abatement contractor can fix the problem. These tips should smooth the way. —KATIE LARSEN

Scrape it Using a 4-inch utility blade or a 12-inch drywall knife, start by dry scraping. If you're getting stuck or damaging the ceiling as you work, moisten the popcorn finish with a garden sprayer, taking care not to oversaturate and cause the substrate to sag.

Smooth it Put a sand patch, cutting imperfections with joint compound. Or add a hand-troweled touch for a vintage look. Prep the coating substrate with quick-set drywall mud, apply a knock-spread like joint compound, and then brush on a finish compound in a downward pattern.

Cover it Masking an entire layer of drywall is a great option, but it's too difficult to scrape. Use lighter-weight 56-inch wallboard. To ease the work, if you're going alone, rent a drywall lift (about \$34 per day).



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Major multitasker

A dated cook space gives way to a sophisticated, open gathering place for family and friends. BY DEBORAH BALDWIN + PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN GRUEN



THERE'S A REASON they call it the heart of the home. More than just a place for food prep, today's kitchens are lively destinations, where guests join in and children gravitate as much of snacks and homework's help. Elizabeth Krupp and her husband, Doug, who are known to entertain dozens of adults and kids at a time, find the needs of their household—and social schedule—in mind when they renovated the 1970s house they share with three young sons, in New Canaan, Connecticut. Working with designer Jerry Seidemann, of Drexel Inc., and general contractor Chris Kuehn,

they enlarged the kitchen to create a free-flowing staging ground with a marble-topped island, a butcher's pantry, a breakfast nook, and prep space to spare. Features like five-panel cabinets, sleek pulls, a marble palette, and easy-to-clean stainless-steel countertops to the fresh, streamlined look. Elizabeth, a pre-organizer and weekend baker, also looked at no storage. "I like having everything in its place, like dedicated shelves for baking racks and trays," she says. "The racks and dishwashers allow kids and guests to help make up dishes, though their playing of room to just grab a seat and watch



BEFORE

INSPIRE Despite a sparse stip in 2000, the 1970s kitchen still had a traffic-cutting peninsula and built-in breakfast cabinets.

AFTER Homeowner Elizabeth Krupp sits with her 12-year-old son, who is helping to make up dishes, though their playing of room to just grab a seat and watch

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN GRUEN

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Light beams through lantern-style chandeliers from its enlarged window overlooking the sunroom. Pendant lights. Photos: Andrea Design



Glass-front cabinets have built-in touch-matching and a drawer stone counter space, suggesting a built-in island. The breakfast is a large island, built by the architect.

after

Opened up, bumped out, and suggested by a walk-in pantry and a larger breakfast nook, it's now a 522-square-foot living space.

1. Added space for a built-in pantry with French doors that match ones added next to the fridge.

2. Relocated the island with a vent duct for a high-top range out to a larger window.

3. Removed the peninsula and replaced the island with one that has seating and a prep sink.

4. Bumped out two walls and added sliders opening onto a patio next to the peninsula.



Thirty-two and guests remodel the cooking zone by tapping the hidden drawers and wine rack in the built-in island. Ashpendon drawers. Sub Zero



pro advice

“If space allows, go for two sinks—one for prep and one for cleanup. It signals that this is an ‘interactive’ kitchen, where friends and family members can get involved.”



The first-class built-in pantry “looks like a real one,” adds granite countertops, a silver granite backsplash, and a sparkling ceiling fixture. Photos: Philpott/Philpott

Blacksmith finished the new breakfast nook with a cast aluminum pedestal table and artwork she painted herself. Table: D.Y.

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ADALTA

Pitch perfect

A couple of DIYers move their master bath out from under a treacherous ceiling slope to create a rustic retreat that befits their mountain home

BY NINA MAJUM • PHOTOGRAPHS BY NEIL LONG

OLD ROOM angles can telegraph old-house charm. Or not. The sloped ceiling in the upstairs bath in Patricia and Jeremiah McAlle's 1920s farmhouse, in Bigfork, Montana, was just plain annoying. "You couldn't stand up without hitting your head," Patricia recalls. Since they were getting married, the couple decided to turn the bath and two bedrooms on the second floor into an open-plan master suite. For convenience, as well as better head clearance, they moved the bath to a rear-facing north wall, closer to the sleep space and under a gentler slant, and finished it with the soft-white walls and rustic wood trim Patricia planned for the whole house. Jeremiah's construction skills brought the vision to life in one month of working weekends, not including stockpiling the outside a slab of blue pine from a friend for the vanity top, salvaged 2x6s for the base, and barn wood bought on Craigslist for \$1 per foot for the pricing. "It's such a sense of accomplishment to have master rooms designed to our taste," says Patricia of the remodel. "It's our sanctuary, and it came out even better than we imagined."

BEFORE Inconveniently located down the hall from the bedroom, the old bath had a head-bumping ceiling slope

AFTER Pale walls and floors contrast with the wood vanity, while rectangular sinks and toilet updates give it a modern update



BEFORE



homeowner tip

TELESAH MAJUM
BIGFORK, MONT.
"Cohesion is key. We repeated the shower floor tile in the toilet alcove and barn-wood trim throughout."



Match the painted tongue-and-groove paneling and barnwood trim from the entrance area. Toilet: Kohler

before

The ceiling slant was too steep to allow for a shower, and the couple had to share a single sink.



after

In building the bath, next to the new sleep space, and a room for a walk-in shower, double sinks, and a higher ceiling.

1. Framed out and finished three shower walls from space that had been a spare bedroom.
2. Put the vanity perpendicular to the window to create an alcove wall to turn wood above it.
3. Added a sliding barn door to eliminate a space-hogging door swing.



4. Tucked the toilet into a windowed alcove formed by the shower.
5. Located fixtures along interior walls to prevent plumbing from water intrusion.
6. Skipped a tub (there's one downstairs) in favor of a large walk-in shower.

Quick climbers

Vigorous perennial vines can turn a bare arbor, fence, or stacked stone wall into a garden focal point in no time—just be sure to choose wisely

BY ANDREW KEYS

TOO RESTLESS to stay put, vines are forever lusting for greater height and brighter light as they clamber upward and outward. Fager as they are, the wrong kind of vine soon becomes a garden pest that can smother everything in its path—think the English ivy creeping toward your house from under the neighbor's fence. But the group of well-behaved annual and perennial vines highlighted here, both native and nonnative imports, need only routine pruning to keep them in check. Use their robust growth to envelop everything from a utilitarian chain-link fence to a handsome pergola with a rustic touch of color. These fast growers can provide the coverage, privacy, or shade you need in a jiffy, growing from 6 to 20 feet in a year.

Soft-stemmed species, like hops, establish quickly and are on their way to maximum height after a second year in the ground. Woody vines, like wisteria, are slower to take and support the "sleep, eat, grow" adage: not much productivity the first year, then a little growth the following season before a spurt in the third.

Read on for 11 showy vines and outstanding cultivars that will add colorful flowers, interesting foliage, or enticing fragrance faster than just about any other garden plant.

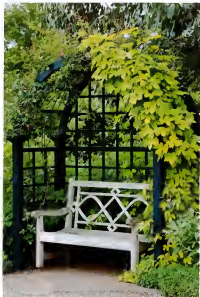
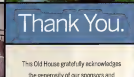


PHOTO: GAIL MCKENNA/ISTOCK

The ascending chocolate foliage of a hops vine, if draped on a trellis over a garden bench or arbor, can provide relief from the summer heat.



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Summer bloomers

Turn these flowering vines along a fence, trellis or up a wall for waves of blossoms that start in June.

1. TRUMPET CREEPER (*Campsis radicans*)

The best known of the woody climber is this rambly Southern creeper that uses aerial rootlets to climb up to 30 feet with orange to red blooms. In smaller gardens, the less aggressive *C. grandiflora* 'Manger's Gold' (shown) has a similar look, with peachy-orange trumpet flowers from June to August. It grows up to 25 feet tall and 15 feet wide in Zones 6-9.

2. CLIMBING BURNING HEART (*Desmodium illinoense*)

Heart-shaped flowers in glowing yellow, white, or purplish-pink dot this vine's dark-green foliage and fade to white from summer into fall. It grows up to 25 feet tall and 15 feet wide in Zones 4-8.

3. CORAL HONEYSAUCKLE (*Lonicera sempervirens*)

This woody climber, native to the Southeast, is beloved by hummingbirds. Try 'Meyer Whiskey' (shown) for bright coral-red flowers and dark green leaves from early summer through fall; once established, the blooms retain their color even in drought. It grows up to 15 feet tall and 6 feet wide in Zones 4-9. But select a vine seed, 'Japanica'—it will overwinter in your zone.

4. CLEMATIS (*Clematis vitalba*)

This group of small-flowered climbing vines blooms later than other climber species, from early summer into fall. Deer-resistant 'Peach Spout' (shown) outblossoms many other cultivars with 2-inch-wide, deep purple petals over dark green, deciduous leaves. It grows up to 15 feet tall and 6 feet wide in Zones 4-11.



Foliage standouts

Have a shady yard?

These vines, prized for their ornamental foliage, can tolerate low light.

1. VIRGINIA CREEPER (*Viticoecus quinquefolia*)

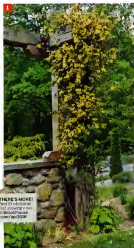
This woody vine clings to anything without help, by means of adhesive disks and thorns in some to part shade. The foliage on Red Wall (shown) starts out bronze and finishes with strong fiery-red color. It grows up to 50 feet tall and 10 feet wide in Zones 3-9.

2. COMMON HOP (*Humulus lupulus*)

This leafy, trailing vine attracts butterflies and tolerates drought. 'Aureum' (shown) has stunning lime-green foliage that darkens over time. It grows up to 20 feet tall and 6 feet wide in Zones 4-8.

3. VARIEGATED KIVI (*Actinidia chinensis*)

Light shade helps boost the color of this trailing vine's green-to-white-to-pink-mottled leaves. It grows up to 20 feet high and 10 feet wide in Zones 4-8.



Fragrant beauties

Place these aromatic climbers near patio seating or a pathway where visitors can enjoy their scent.

1. CAROLINA JESSAMINE (*Geopelia sempervirens*)

This twining woody evergreen vine is a symphony of clouds of gold, heavily-scented trumpets perfume the landscape from February to April. Margenta (shown) has bigger flowers and purplish-white foliage. It grows up to 20 feet tall and 6 feet wide in Zones 7-11.

2. WILD PASSIFLORA (*Passiflora incarnata*)

This summer-blooming tendril climber has multiple purple and white, citrus-scented flowers. Drought-resistant with age, it bears edible fruit in midsummer. It grows up to 60 feet tall and 6 feet wide in Zones 5-9.

3. KENTUCKY WISTERIA (*Wisteria macrocarpa*)

Native-borne wisteria is more forgiving than the Asian cousins and matures to flowering age sooner. The sweet-smelling 'Blue Moon' form (shown) blossoms early in summer with foot-long clusters of lavender flowers and becomes heavy and woody with age, so structural support is vital. It grows up to 25 feet tall and 15 feet wide in Zones 3-9.

4. POET'S ANEMONE (*Anemone officinale*)

Sweetly-scented pink-to-white flowers cloak this twining climber throughout the summer. 'Peach Sunrise' (shown) has gold foliage but needs protection from hot afternoons to keep the color bright. It grows up to 30 feet tall and 15 feet wide in Zones 7-10.



Lend some support

Encouraging a vine to grow where you want it starts with understanding how it climbs and the kind of support structure it needs.

Vines climb using one or more of these methods. **Twineers**, like *Carolina jessamine*, naturally wrap the vines around narrow supports like those of a metal trellis or bamboo guide wire to make an arched trellis structure, like a 4x4 post. **Other vines**, like *climbing heart*, use tendrils—thin stalks that sprout from the main stem and guide vines to grow up. **Climbing vines**, such as *Virginia creeper*, climb a nearby support with adhesive disks, while trumpet creeper uses discs as they hair-like arms to grip heavily as they spread.

Most twining vines, but especially twineers, benefit from a trellis structure in the form of a tube or wire to help them climb up. Tendrils, when they do find something to latch onto, wrap around it and hold, creating a tangled mass, which makes it hard to climb. Climbers that look on brick houses, clinging vines can damage heavily textured walls or brick or mortar joints using their standstill to propel it up. Heavy vines, like *Virginia creeper*, become heavyweights with age and need a substantial structure like a pergola to hold them up. ■

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Make waves

Looking to warm up a wall? Try this whimsical pattern

BY DEBORAH BALLOWS • PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW INGRAM

A CHAIR RAIL is a classic way to bring the eye down and make a large room feel more intimate. Here, paint achieves the same effect while also enlivening the room with a pattern as triplicate—call it an accent wall of meandering waves, or maybe festooned periwinkle strappings.

A DIY template makes this project pretty straightforward. First, choose two paint colors and put down the base coat. Then decide how high you want the rows to be, keeping in mind the height of the ceiling, fixed elements like a window, and furnishings like a bookcase, dresser, or headboard.

To make our template, we used a strip of Mylar 3 inches wide and about 2 feet long; longer strips would work too.

We opted to align the waves evenly, but they could also be staggered for a more dynamic look. Either way, here some fun and furnish the space in the same playful spirit.

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We used a quart-size paint can to make our Mylar template.

STEP-BY-STEP



1) Create a template. Cut a strip of Mylar 3 inches wide. Align paint stick or ruler along its top edge and bump a paint can or small plate against it. Trace a semicircle twice the size over, and repeat. Cut out the semicircles with a hot knife (available at craft stores) or an X-Acto blade.



2) Mark the tops of the rows. With the help of a tape measure and a pencil, lightly mark the heights of the three sets of waves, allowing for the width of the Mylar strip between marks.



3) Continue the marks along the wall. Use a level to draw horizontal lines for the three rows plus a line 3 inches below the lowest one (see Step 4).



4) Tape off the rows. Apply painter's tape just above each penciled line. The fourth strip of tape will protect the base coat when the bottom row of waves is being brushed on.



5) Position the template. Apply spray adhesive to the back of the template and press it in place, with the points at the tape edge, or use a bit of painter's tape to secure it.



6) Paint the waves. Lightly pounce paint around the edges to avoid bleeding; use the stencil brush or a small painter's brush to fill in. Wait a few minutes, peel off the template, repeat it, and repeat. ■

PATTERN: VICKI KAPLAN; ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDREW INGRAM/STYLING: KIMBERLY

Colorful, eclectic dining room

Playful shades and retro accents make this family gathering spot anything but stuffy. BY MICHELLE BRUNNER + PHOTOGRAPH BY VICTORIA PEARSON

HAPPY HUSKIAN HIGHLIGHTS over the darkest room. Just ask costume designer Bethany Herwig, whose dining room is situated in the middle of San Southern California's banglows, recovered late-nineteenth-century. The remedy? Being in Technicolor toasts. "I wanted to live things up, so I painted the hands a bold Tiffany-blue blue," she says. Mid-century-inspired side chairs in lemon-and-olive drab tones continue the playful pattern and provide a fun contrast to a rustic beam table. Overhead, bright mid-century disc light on a whimsical wallpaper, setting the scene for a shoddy little vintage glass chandelier. All the while, country can warlock inspire the room: rounded and slender seats the beam's a warm-toned aesthetic.

For more to give your dream room an actually cherry look, send us



forces table

The generously proportioned table at right dates from the 1890s and was made from solid pine. The French style shows two curvilinear legs and columns in X feet. Available sitting in front, 1890 was three-half size.



bird print wallpaper

Named for a skylight—like a cue from Herwig, who transformed the ceiling here with a stunning stenciled, Daydream wallpaper. \$119.49 a 30-foot roll. royalward.com



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and a coaching award
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October issue
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get this look for less



vintage-tech hardware

Swapping out gold-colored lenses and pods for ones with more character is an easy way to give my place behind the bar. Make them look like I'm giving them a little love.

glass pendant

Herveigh scored her one-of-a-kind 1960s light fixture on 1stdibs.com. The glass-droplet chandelier echoes its shape and gives off softly diffused light—perfect for over the dining room table. 3448.westline.com



mirror backsplash

The reflective enamel tile on the health club floor comes from a high-end retailer. These tiles offer similar sparkle for a fraction of the cost. Ceramic tile, \$19 for a 12-by-14-inch sheet. lucine.com



oversize hatch

With a fresh coat of blue paint and a few modifications, this handcrafted solid pine hatch could stand in for the Porsche's \$375,000 gold-colored 911 with Carrera S True Turquoise. \$26 per gallon. homestead.com



DL:

Flux-leaded glass

Boor panels like the ones shown at left are a hallmark of Arts and Crafts cabinetry. You can scour flea markets

For similar switches or salvaged glass inserts. Or try black standing/line as an easy and inexpensive way to get the look. Just roll out the sticky-backed tape into your design. Call and press into place 312 for a 6-foot roll (www.312.com)

Creature comforts

Planning a remodel? Don't forget about Rover. Today's special built-in features and custom designs go way beyond the doggie door.

BY MARY HARRIS



This not-fancy-looking feature is a built-in doggie door with a built-in doggie door. It's a doggie door. It's a doggie door. It's a doggie door.

HEATED FLOORS, custom built-ins, a separate shower—for the dog? As more households than ever come four-legged family members, owners are adding pup projects—from the down-to-earth to the downright extravagant—to their remodels, and customizers and designers are taking note. More canine construction happens in backyards, kitchens, laundry areas, and mudrooms, so customizer Wood-Midwest launched Pet Prior to target dog owners' short list of needs: feeding, storage, and grooming. And custom-necessary outfit Rev A Bird's has a Web page showing how to "dogify" an project. Here are some of the more interesting—and ingenious—dog designs

Chow time According to the most recent National Kitchen & Bath Association trend report, food stations are the top pet-centric ask in remodels. Owners are building them into kitchen islands, under benches, or into drawers that open and close. Some even have separate water-bowl niches with spigots.

The latest dog dining location? Towel racks, says Oregon designer Robyn Ragby Fisher. "Why not? It's totally unused space." For a client with Italian greyhounds, she installed three, spaced far apart. "One of the dogs was a chocolate and would eat the other's food."

Most commonly, owners decide to

create a nook in the bottom of an open-base cabinet, often fitted with cutouts to hold bowls. But whether the food stays accessible or gets tucked away when guests appear, the most important thing to plan is out of the way—in a corner near a pantry or back door, say. And forget about mopping around filling bowls. Items slide out trash and recycle bins next to the food station are perfect for storing those bag bags of kibble.

Good grooming Portuguese galvanized tubs are a thing of the past. Today, you can bathe your dog in everything from extra-sticky soaks to virtual spas. Architectural designer Rich

Holten is building a dedicated grooming room for a 40-pound Portuguese water dog, complete with bar-colored tiles to hide stray shedding. For convenience, his client opted for a shower pan raised waist-high so he can scrub in straight-up comfort. Other amenities on the rise: concrete floors with radiant heating, towel storage, and laundry shelves.

Can't swing a dedicated dog room? Try adding a grooming spot to the laundry or mudroom, says Magin Chantella, a New Jersey designer who also breeds Norwich terriers. Start with a tiled floor that pushes into a drain, and designate a corner for the bathing area. People with larger dogs need to opt for a low-threshold shower, with a handhold nearby, while smaller dogs do fine on a laundry sink. She reminds clients to also think about extra storage for towels and other grooming necessities, and always supports using taller boards, which are easier to clean than walls.

Snooze zones "The most important consideration for sleep spots is visibility," says NKBA president Maria Seppertsen. While dogs need a quiet place to relax, "they still want to be able

to see their humans—and vice versa," she explains. Many homeowners integrate beds or crates into a run of cubework, a kitchen island, or a built-in bench. Dogs like to be cozy, so look to install beds near existing heat registers, or add registers to a new sleep spot.

Get updates Sometimes Fill needs to stay out of the dining room. Portable business don't suit any style points, so for one home builder created a custom pocket half-door to close off the kitchen from the dining room. Anticipating casual canyoning, she used the waist-high masonry with two glass and topped it with stainless steel to prevent damage from dog nails.

Less costly solutions include an interior Dutch door or, say, a laundry room, or even a custom wrought-iron or wood gate installed in a doorway.

A space of one's own Then there are the people who build pet palaces, dedicated spaces that range from clever to downright costly. When Oregon designer Joel Benley replaced the porch of his circa 1900 farmhouse with a kitchen extension, he built a doghouse in the crawl space below, complete with cedar floors, a removable bed, and an exit to the outdoors. He says dog-eye-view windows are an add-on his clients frequently request. One owner we know of added a dog den with heated water bowls and a heated concrete ice-melt system to keep it ice- and snow-free during winter. And while Chantella made sure to include a TV and workstation in her 1920s bungalow basement, the space is mostly a sun-bath-friend zone. "We made it dog-friendly with heated ceramic floors, dog doors, step stools up to the couches, and doggie hangout spaces," she says. A wooden crate "converts" boxes into pups, with bedding and top accoutrements on top.

There are some lucky dogs. ■

PROJECT OF THE WEEK

HOW TO BUILD A TAKEOUT MENU HOLDER



Looking for a tidy alternative to your cluttered menu drawer? Craft our well-mount menu holder. Use our plywood-to-sits-and-framed it with 1x2s, then make an angled bin from a 1x4, cut into two wedges. A coat of milk paint gives it a sunny pop of color, and a rectangle of green chalkboard paint lets you customize a message—or scribble down your order.

You'll find all the tools and supplies necessary for this—and any—home project at The Home Depot nearest you.

For step-by-step instructions, go to thisishow.com/project



Photo: © 2011 The Home Depot

That's a wrap!

The TOH TV crew finishes remodeling an 1895 Queen Anne for a young family and delivers both modern functionality and Victorian-era charm. BY JILL GONNORS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TRULLI



BRIGHT AND HARDWORKING

ABOVE: Homeowners Marc and Katherine Ricci and their children gather at the newly topped island in their kitchen, a new space that adds its functionality to modern white cabinets, a large bay window, and layered lighting. The island itself is a shaggy shallop. If not long, with a wide drawer for dish storage on the side that faces the sleeked shallow shelves behind cabinet doors for dry goods on the other side. Vintage box pulls Katherine found at a salvage shop were just right for the cabinet drawers.

RIGHT: The TOH TV crew worked with the architect to plan to blend the best of old and new.



PHOTO: JENNIFER HALL, GETTY IMAGES; STEVEN HARRIS/ISTOCK



ENTER GLADLY

TOH: Previously hidden off by a full wall, the once coffin-like foyer is now welcoming and elegant. Thanks to lower chairs upgraded with the shagreened metal posts and custom wall grouting installed by the TOH TV crew.

LEFT: The ceiling alone, just off the kitchen, features a vintage round table that Katherine found at an antique market and a custom floor-to-ceiling bookcase for family treasures. She has always had yellow kitchen. The column-draped partition and large closet provide changing stations and extra storage near the bedrooms, just a few steps from a newly added rear entry.

RIGHT: KITCHEN: The new island adds a new space for the family. The island is topped with a shaggy shallop. If not long, with a wide drawer for dish storage on the side that faces the sleeked shallow shelves behind cabinet doors for dry goods on the other side. Vintage box pulls Katherine found at a salvage shop were just right for the cabinet drawers.

WHEN KATHERINE and Marc Ricci fell for this old house, they envisioned a cheerful space for their family, but they knew it needed upgrades—so much so that they were really surprised when buying the place in August 2014. They moved out again eight months later so that TOH TV general contractor Tim Silva and the crew could renovate the three-story, 3,200-square-foot Queen Anne. Architect Max Cummings created the master plan, and the Riccis also tapped the expertise of kitchen designer Linda Clemons and interior designer Amanda Reed. The renovation motto: Keep it Victorian-era in feeling, but here-and-now in functionality.

Once the dust settled, the Ricci home emerged as a deft blend of old and new, seen and unseen. Largely hidden are such essentials as beams supporting a reconfigured kitchen ceiling, mudroom area that spans the entire back of the house, new ductwork for heating and cooling, and a new copper water line from curb to house. In full, plonk form are a cherry kitchen with a new bay window looking out onto the backyard, a back-entry and mudroom bump-out, a luxurious master suite, fresh color palettes made and set, and salvaged items incorporated throughout the house, which Katherine and Marc find “good for the soul.” With the renovation complete, the Riccis have moved back in—and so have Katherine’s reports, they unpacked everything. “We do have to stay,” she says. “The house perfectly suits the way we live and play as a family.”



For a Better Lawn, Start with Better Grass.

Why do landscape architects love Zoysia grass? It thrives in the heat, survives the coldest winters, and needs far less water than other grasses. Homeowners looking for a low maintenance lawn that always looks great should consider Zoysia grass from Zoysia Farms (zoysia.com). Get a full-sized strong lawn for only pennies per square foot. Shipped direct to your home!

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EVENT SPOTLIGHT

2016 International Builders' Show

Las Vegas | January 19-21

The 2016 NAHB International Builders' Show attracted thousands of building professionals over the course of three days in Las Vegas. TCM General Contractor Tom Slive was on hand at this year's show, greeting fans, signing autographs, and answering a variety of home improvement questions.



Tom greets fans at the ADEK/TruGreen booth.



Tom talks flooring at the Lumber Liquidators booth.

Fauna for your door

A knocker is an opportunity to give your house a little extra personality. So why not go wild? BY KATELIN HILL + PHOTOGRAPHY BY TED MORRISON

LONG BEFORE electricity propelled doorbells to the forefront for announcing visitors, knockers had been doing the job, even as far back as ancient Greece. But once with a flourish, knockers only became popular during the Renaissance, when they evolved into small-scale works of art. Door knockers shaped like menacing gargoyle were hung to ward off evil spirits, while psychological beasts seemed warning guests. In a smaller vein, whimsical designs are showing up today—occasionally fierce, but mostly less than, H of our favorite featured creatures.

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Take Flight

MICHAEL
Medieval brass with an intricate design like this 6 1/2" x 4 1/2" x 1 1/2" highlights the ornate dragon's head and a graceful silhouette.

It's a little attraction

COLIN
A small, ornate brass knocker with a lion's head and a graceful silhouette. Made of brass with a hand-applied patina finish. Size: 4 1/2" x 3 1/2" x 1 1/2". Includes the mounting hardware. Wholesale: \$70. Retail: \$100. Details at: lumberliquidators.com

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DISCOUNT

bee's knocker

MICHAEL HEULT
Made of brass with polished
chrome-plated finish.
Size: 3 1/2" W x 5 1/4" H x 2 1/2"
Highlights: A cartoon-like
quality and high shine make
this bee a bopper. \$100.
dignitex.com
20% off Details at
1800home.com/deals

owl choice

THE OWEN CO.
Made of brass with an
antique-bronze finish.
Size: 3 1/2" W x 5 1/2" H x 2 1/2"
Highlights: This owl will
keep a watchful eye out
night and day. \$40.
theowen.com



whiled around

ART VENTURES
Made of aluminum with an
antique-brass
finish. Size: 4 1/2" W x 3 1/2" H x 2 1/2"
Highlights: A classic pig
design is rimmed with the
fin and has an oval hole.
\$36. artventures.com



trophy mount

THE CO. INC.
Made of cast iron with a
rust-iron finish.
Size: 2 1/2" W x 12 1/4" H x 2 1/2"
Highlights: Weighing in at
3 1/2 pounds, this antlered
kick butt delivers a major
impact. \$30.
thecompanyinc.com



just hanging out

THE RENOVATION SURFER
Made of brass with an
antique-bronze finish.
Size: 2 1/2" W x 3 1/4" H x 2 1/2"
Highlights: Made of 100%
Tennessee-made brass, it
includes just the surfers
lightest touch: a set of vinyl
feet. \$30. renosurf.com



why find

HOOGST
Size: 4 1/2" W x 3 1/2" H with a
natural-patina finish.
Size: 4 1/2" W x 3 1/2" H x 3 1/2"
Highlights: Made by the tall,
this knocker looks like an
animal. \$10. hoogst.com



deerpoke

JOHNAT LANE INDUSTRIES
Made of brass with a
brushed metal finish.
Size: 2 1/2" W x 3 1/4" H x 2 1/2"
Highlights: Made of a
stainless steel body, this cool entryway
choice will really pop on a
dark-hued door. \$30.
johnatlaneindustries.com

TIP

A knocker shouldn't
intrude on door
panels, so measure
your door's stiles
and rails before
buying. Hang it 5 feet
high for best effect.



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butterfly

ADORNALITY
Made of brass with a polished
chrome-plated finish.
Size: 4 1/2" W x 3 1/4" H x 2 1/2"
Highlights: This white
knocker is both shiny thanks
to polished chrome handles.
\$25. adornality.com
20% off Details at
theofficetofind.com

pretty muley

THE CO. INC.
Size: 3 1/2" W x 12 1/4" H x 2 1/2"
Made of aluminum with a
brushed metal finish.
Size: 2 1/2" W x 3 1/4" H x 2 1/2"
Highlights: The animal's
tail is the star of the
show. \$16.
thecompanyinc.com

From dated to "Do come in!"

A more open entry, a fresh coat of paint, and spiffy new doors warm up a lackluster 1960s house

BY KATHRYN G. SHIA IVANG • ILLUSTRATION BY DRAGGATE INC.



Upgrading to wood grain doors for the entry and garage gives the house a new look.



BEFORE

finishing touches

Hardcore accents add warmth and polish to a ho-hum facade

1234



house numbers

These 6-inch-high stainless-steel digits from Houzz.com, finished in copper-brass, are a clean-lined yet rustic nod to the house's address. Around \$30, wuzh.com

paint

An instant update for the multicolored brick veneer, water-proof masonry paint in Sand, a buttery yellow, \$55 per gallon, benjaminmoore.com

screen

The house's horizontal lines are echoed in this distressed granite outdoor screen with square glass-to-soften angles. \$240, houseofhugoburton.com

entry door

A new wood door with one large light, complemented by a cottage-style garage door, is a major curb appeal boost. Simpson Door, from \$400, simplendoor.com

"DOOR HOUSE isn't very exciting," says Simon O'Donnell of the 1967 Minimal Traditional in Rocky River, Ohio, which he shares with his wife, Nicole, and their two kids. So we asked architect Mark Wright for ideas to make it more welcoming.

"It's similar to the other mid-century houses on the street but has what we call 'weak ornamentation,'" Wright says, pointing out the plain garage door, plastic shutters, and dated light fixtures as culprits. His first recommendation: make the facade more friendly. Remove two of the "sage-like" porch posts and dress up the remaining one with wood inset boards to suggest a grander column. Creamy-yellow paint softens the look of the multicolored brick, and wood-trimmed garage and entry doors offer a nice contrast.

Kenneth's takeaway: "We like that the changes are so double—especially that opened-up porch!"

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This Old House is Brand New!



Tune in **this month** as the crew begins work on a built-from-the-ground-up farmhouse that combines state-of-the-art engineering with traditional expert craftsmanship.

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Install a critter-proof garden fence

Use pressure-treated lumber to build a sturdy post-and-rail enclosure that prevents animals from swiping your veggies

BY SAI KANGICA + PHOTOGRAPHY BY WENDELL T. WEBER



COST \$450 for 66 linear feet of fence
TIME Two days
DIFFICULTY Moderate
Squaring the corner posts takes some practice

IF YOU'RE ELMER FUDD, you don't want thieves by seed as Acorn Post Control robot after Bugs Bunny. If you're a seasoned gardener, you know the frustration your tomatoes, peppers, herbs, and other staples in the way to go. Our version lends off two varieties of varieties, with wide, wavy-wire mesh panels to keep out rabbits and dogs, and tighter, PVC-coated galvanized wire buried below to stymie subterranean a-bomb woodchucks and moles. A gate at each end allows you to wheelbarrow in garden accessories like mulch and compost. The Old House senior technical editor Mark Powers shows you how to use common building materials—and not mechanical interventions—to preserve and protect your hard-grown produce.

Pressure-treated posts: \$6 each and 4x4 posts: \$4.25 each. Pressure-treated rail posts: \$1.50 each. 2x4 posts: \$1.50 each. 2x6 posts: \$2.50 each. 2x8 posts: \$3.50 each. 2x10 posts: \$4.50 each. 2x12 posts: \$5.50 each. 2x14 posts: \$6.50 each. 2x16 posts: \$7.50 each. 2x18 posts: \$8.50 each. 2x20 posts: \$9.50 each. 2x22 posts: \$10.50 each. 2x24 posts: \$11.50 each. 2x26 posts: \$12.50 each. 2x28 posts: \$13.50 each. 2x30 posts: \$14.50 each. 2x32 posts: \$15.50 each. 2x34 posts: \$16.50 each. 2x36 posts: \$17.50 each. 2x38 posts: \$18.50 each. 2x40 posts: \$19.50 each. 2x42 posts: \$20.50 each. 2x44 posts: \$21.50 each. 2x46 posts: \$22.50 each. 2x48 posts: \$23.50 each. 2x50 posts: \$24.50 each. 2x52 posts: \$25.50 each. 2x54 posts: \$26.50 each. 2x56 posts: \$27.50 each. 2x58 posts: \$28.50 each. 2x60 posts: \$29.50 each. 2x62 posts: \$30.50 each. 2x64 posts: \$31.50 each. 2x66 posts: \$32.50 each. 2x68 posts: \$33.50 each. 2x70 posts: \$34.50 each. 2x72 posts: \$35.50 each. 2x74 posts: \$36.50 each. 2x76 posts: \$37.50 each. 2x78 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5 Add the fencing

A) Staple on the upper fencing. Begin by attaching the fencing to a corner post, hammering in ¼-inch predrilled staples every 36 inches along its end, and set the top ends in the middle of the upper rail. Staple the fencing along the upper rail, uncoiling the roll as you go. Use tensioning pins to trim it and staple it along the opposite corner post. Then fasten it to the middle posts and lower rail. Repeat the process for the remaining sides, skipping the space between the gateposts.

B) Add lower fence. Use linesman pliers to trim the PVC-coated galvanized wire as long as a fence side. Staple the top edge of the wire to the lower rail and posts. Push the fence down 12 inches into the trench, and use your hand to crease the wire away from the posts, forming a shelf that will prevent any burrowers from getting under. Then bend the wire down into the channel. Repeat for each side of the fence, then backfill the trench with soil.



4 Set the posts

A) Sink the first corner post. Resting the stakes using the notch under a marker, stop a corner post into its hole and add or remove stakes until the bottom of the lower rail notch meets the string. The faces of the notched sides should touch the string. Use a level to plant the post in both directions and backfill the footing with a mixture of excavated earth and loose tamping it with a scrap of 2x4.

B) Set the next post. Dig a field post in the next hole. Screw 2x4 rails into the upper notch of the first post temporarily and fit its base against the matching notch of the second post. Check the rail with a string, as shown, and adjust or remove stakes from the hole for the second post until the rail corner is level. Plant the post with its face touching the string, then backfill it. Remove and reuse the temporary rail to set the remaining posts. For the two fence posts use fast-setting concrete as backfill.

C) Attach the rails. Once all the posts are set, position an upper rail without end in the corner post notch, leaving space for the perpendicular rail, and the other end in the notch at the next post. At the overhanging end, make a notch in the rail at the halfway point of the notch. Remove the rail and cut it to length with a circular saw. Align the rail in the notch using a 2x4 string, as shown, then attach it to the corner post with a pair of 3-inch deck screws. Attach the base end with two more screws. Repeat the process for the remaining rails, skipping over the space between the gateposts.

6 Build the gates

A) Assemble the brace. Back on the work surface, overlap the gate rails with the string, keeping the width about 1 inch narrower than the distance between the gateposts and as tall as the space between the rails. Square the corners with a rafter square and mark where the parts overlap. Set the circular saw depth to cut half the thickness of the material and notch half lap joints with a series of cuts, as shown. Clear the notches as before. Then screw the parts together with a pair of 1½-inch deck screws at each joint.

B) Arch the top. Drive a nail into the center of the 2x6 top rail, set it slightly from the top edge. Add two nylon end-nails, centered on the rail's width, spaced a length of string over the center rail and under the end rails, to set the curve, as shown. Cut the arch with a jigsaw, then round the edges with sandpaper.

C) Add the brace. Test a 2x4 diagonally across the gate with either end roughly centered on a corner. Mark where the brace overlaps the gate, as shown, and transfer the mark up the edges of the brace. Cut the brace it angled ends with a circular saw, then screw through it and into the gate with 3-inch deck screws. Cover the gate with welded wire mesh using staples. Repeat this process to build the second gate.



TIP
To prevent the gate from sagging, screw the brace in so the lower end points toward the lower hinge.



7 Install the gates

A) Slide the gates. Place the gates in the opening. Add spacers underneath and the gate's lower rail to level with the ones on the fence. Center the gate in the opening by looping string in between the posts and the gate, as shown.

B) Add the hardware. Position the strap hinges on one side of the gate and mark the location of the screws on the rail and hinge post. Remove the hinges, drill pilot holes, and attach the hardware. Repeat the process for the latch, as shown, then install the second pair of the same way. Finish the posts of both ends and finish with a sealant with stainless steel nails or construction adhesive. ■



A

Handcrafted archway leads into a lush garden path. The archway is covered in ivy and other climbing plants. The garden path is made of stone and is surrounded by various green plants, including ferns and flowering shrubs.



B

Young boy looking at something in the water. The boy is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. The background is a dense forest with many green plants and trees.

HERE'S HOW AN ORDINARY SUBURBAN LOT TRANSFORMED INTO A SERIES OF MAGICAL GARDEN ROOMS—WITH IDEAS ANYONE CAN USE

By Tovah Martin • Photographs by Keller + Keller



It all started simply enough,

with her son's request for a playhouse.

Before that, Ellen Lath was busy with her aromatology practice and hadn't given a thought to exploring the two suburban acres around her home, in Needham, Massachusetts. Of course, young Jonathan didn't see the point of a playhouse sitting pretty on the lawn; he wanted an adventurous hide-away far from the prying eyes of grown-ups.

Searching for a suitable driveway that wasn't plastic or pebbles, Ellen happened upon a cedar playhouse built by Bill McKenney, a farmer and carpenter in Maine. "A wonderful, Paul Bunyan type of fellow," as Ellen describes him, McKenney made the trip to deliver the perfect match to the driveway. To forge a path to it from the house, an exercise that unsettled a nervous, nervous McKenney would add a bridge. Further out, the path hit a stream. Could he add two more bridges to the agenda? But let's cascade! To add anything to the landscape they needed to be vertical structures, Ellen realized. And the fanciful bridges that McKenney crafted warranted appropriate plantings to grace their lanes, she saw. They deserved evergreens arching around their wells, and the view out onto open fields needed to frame something beautiful and botanical. Meanwhile, Jonathan had another request—how about some roundabout paths

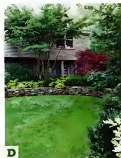
above: The "meditation circle" (C) is a quiet spot in front of the house, got far from the street but sheltered by an American beech hedge. Japanese forest grass thrives in the shady environment.

RIGHT: A woodland garden leads into the front yard with a low wall bordering a raised-bed cottage (D) which also lines the path to the door.

leading to his playhouse so he could make expeditions through the yard itself. Of course, more paths would mean more plantings, and before he knew it, Ellen was enrolled in landscaping classes.

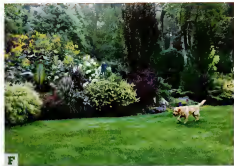
Early on Ellen's education as a gardener, a friend gave her a sketching lesson that proved providential: four seasonal visits to Boston designer Kevin Doyle's garden, Green Gables, which is divided into outdoor "rooms," each accented with sculpture and clay pots. His landscape also features open lawns, woodlands, and wetlands. She soon engaged Doyle to help her develop her plan, including ways to give the land welcome contours without the need for earthmovers. The eventual result was a perimeter of hedges that swoops around from the side yard to her stone sheds on the front walkway path. More gradually, they dictated a gathering spot above the first bridge that would be designed with the whole family in mind, and which took form as a circular area with granite seating and a monolithic rock table surrounded by Japanese staples. That successful space was followed by a simple "killy," a three-sided building covered by a roof—where Ellen tends with her morning coffee, even when it rains—and, last, the addition of an aisle of native black gum trees leading to it.

As any novice would, Ellen learned valuable lessons as the garden took shape. "Jonathan wanted a 'meow'



THE PLAN

Before homeowner Ellen Lath got bitten by the gardening bug, the two-acre suburban lot held a larger front lawn, a low-lying evergreen around the foundation, and no landscaping in back. Over the course of almost two decades she added rustic pathways to a playhouse on the edge of the property, several bridges, a three-sided folly, and a wood pergola. Massive stone features include a Goshen-stone front walkway, fountains, a bench, a table, and planters that mark gathering spots. Given the swings and the stream, all the plants look at most cordial here.



OPPOSITE: A brick terrace (E) runs behind the house with an accompanying raised stone planter and stone wall to serve as a protected area for admiring the view of the lake.

LEFT: Cooper ranges as the back lawn (F), which is bordered by greenings that emphasize garden and house foliage. In late summer, the alpine sends up yellow flower spikes.

BELOW: A gate crafted from salvaged pine (G) marks the entrance between granite posts marking the dog run.

around his playhouse, so I planted a sweep of fountain-leaved "Star and Substance" hosts. The next morning it was gone—totally eaten by deer," recalls Ellen.

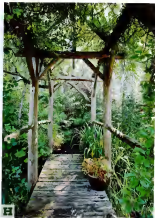
With the garden facing a processions spreading out from the back of the house, Ellen renovated the back terrace to better accommodate the view. When the weeds abate, she settles into a chair beneath a pergola near the driveway, surrounded by a row of native flowering shrubs. To screen out the neighbors, she planted a hedge of variegated weigela arborescens along that side of the house.

As a network of paths, beyond the initial trail to the playhouse, was matted, plants were so to make the journey more interesting. In the overgrown areas, mountain-living perennials, ferns, primulas, anemones, hydrangeas, and dahlias love the soggy soil. With the backdrop of hill of purpose and plants, the front yard was due for a face-lift. To screen the porch, Ellen added a hedge of American birch underplanted with lowwood and "the Danes" came to an end. In much privacy resulted from the hedge that Ellen was able to insert a meditation aisle with a fountain and stone starting just footcrops from the road. A low fieldstone wall defines the front yard and leads foot traffic around from the side of the house to a gated dog run, her most recent installation. That low wall continues in front of the house, forming a raised bed for weeping Japanese maples along the walk to the door.



Early in the process, she opted for a DRY approach. "I decided that part of the fun was doing it myself rather than having someone to design my landscape," she explains. "I wanted to be responsible for my own mistakes and successes." Along the way, she learned that plants are what truly excite her. But aside from some clematis and hydrangeas, flowers are not critical players in her garden. To preserve Jonathan's wild domain, she kept billowing trees uncut, and, as for the back-drap, she found, to her delight, foliage stands out. She mastered the art of filling space with succulent masses from a distant tale by novice-turned friend Gary Keller. "He suggested taking black and white photos of the garden throughout the year," she says. "Only strong statements work on black and white. I could see what was missing."

That realization led to an emphasis on form. From there, Ellen worked on color. One of her favorite combinations is the gold and chartreuse leaves of shrubs such as Thunberg's madeweed, Tiger Eyes nandea, and golden dwarf hollyberry with the burgundy foliage of plants such as bronze dwarf bamboo, ligularia, perennials, and a hosta that she houses indoors in winter. And ornamental grasses sprinkled to add fountain-like shapes and late-season flowers. To add more strong structural elements, she brought in works by artist and friend Jill Nooney, including giant crafted from fern



H

movement. The first bridge (H), built with cedar poles, has a rustic wood canopy with shingles that form a green roof.

ASSET: Primrose and grass like sweet flag line the stream. It's where it curves away from the covered bridge.

OPPOSITE: Visiting children play in the "fairy" cave. It holds chairs, a table and a nest of decorative baskets and buckets.



I

salvage that honor the agrarian roots of the region. Greenhouse pots accommodated beehive walls, and local fieldstone was used for paths. Frost-tender concrete urns serve as focal points throughout the year.

The plant list has evolved, of course. As trees such as the golden raindrops, magnolia, umbellifers, pines, and sweet gum guard one over the first 10 years, they shade out the large grasses. The garden features lower perennials today and more shrubs and trees. All release the slightly damp soil in residence.

While Jonathan and his aunt, Stephanie, are now grown and on their own, visiting children and grandchildren still enjoy exploring the garden's fanciful dimensions, including the furnished fairy. For Ellen, the rewards of her passion for plants exceed way beyond the usual fear that she has outgrown. "I am so excited to the land now—I know where the dragonflies bring out and where the worms congregate," she explains. "It's such a powerful thing." ■



J

THIS OLD HOUSE #DIYDARE 2016 CHALLENGE

What would you do with a few feet of trim and spray paint? Or a wall-mount sink and several scraps of cedar? Or a workbench top and some casters?

Those are the questions we put to the teams of TOHers in the following pages. After some head-scratching, a threatened resignation, a couple of disagreements (shouting matches, really), and a mistake or two (but, fortunately, none that drew too much blood), the answers are in. We think they're pretty great. So here's another question: **COULD YOU DO BETTER?** It's your turn to make use of any scraps you've got lying around, supplemented, of course, by one or three trips to the home center, to build a project of your own. We're calling it the **#DIYDARE**. Just check out the pages ahead and get inspired, then snap a photo and send it along. **(HASH)TAG, YOU'RE IT.**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK LUND • STYLING BY VAUGHAN GUDDEN
ILLUSTRATED LETTERING BY MARY KATE MUGENITT



"Strumming by the sink you just made from scrap lumber is better than singing in the shower."

Doug Adams
Deputy Art Director

Liz Muvale
Assistant Photo Editor

If the usual storage side table isn't to your liking, here's one style piece that will clear your mind in a different way.

Standing water

THE TEAM

Doug Adams
Deputy Art Director
Liz Muvale
Assistant
Photo Editor

THEIR STUFF

- wall-mount sink (madeup.com)
- cedar 2x4s, 4x4s, and decking (greatsource.com)
- wood glue (getitthrough.com)
- faucet (jetdirect.com)
- tung oil finish (jonas.com)

THEIR SOLUTION

Create a stylish vanity by adding legs and a shelf to an inexpensive wall-mount sink.

"A sink? What are we gonna do with a sink?" Doug asked when Liz told him it'd be part of their #DNDemo challenge. "And water ports, too? We're doomed!" "Relax," said Liz, measuring a length of cedar to verify height. "We're gonna clean up."

Doug immediately got it, and, relieved, began to drive an open-but-storage-friendly base for the \$32 sink's square edges to sit on. A shelf and a towel bar completed the sketch.

They built a rim for the sink to rest on with

cedar rails and glue. Then Liz notched the legs with the miter saw to accept the shelf. Once the legs and shelf were assembled, they rubbed on a coat of tung oil to add luster and some protection to the piece, which now appeared far prettier than the sink's original cost.

Yes indeed, clean up. Doug and Liz, thinking of winning the #DNDemo, before Liz added, "You know I meant that literally!" and handed him a bar of soap.



► The sink rests on three mitered pieces of cedar that are fast slightly, creating a reveal around the porcelain.



► A miter saw makes quick work of the notches in the legs for the frame and the shelf supports.



► Cedar is tough stuff, but adding a coat of tung oil—applying it to the end grain on the legs—gives it a cheap layer of protection.



"Nope, not real cast iron, but our planter will last just as long, plus the lightweight PVC means I look as strong as Sal."

Sal Vaporia
Senior Editor

Allie Adams
Designer

The appliques are attached to the front board and the base with adhesive cement. Green ferns in planters are set in the front for 10 minutes before painting.

Cast in plastic

THE TEAM
Sal Vaporia
Senior Editor
Allie Adams
Designer

TOOLS & SUPPLIES

- > PVC trim and moldings (Home Depot)
- > PVC cement (Home Depot)
- > Interu appliques (Interu.com)
- > hardware
- > spray paint (Furniture.com)
- > contact cement

VIEWER SOLUTION

Mimic the details of a heavy cast-iron planter with lightweight PVC boards and thick em appliques.

Head cocked sideways, Allie was looking at a length of PVC trim in her HD's Doo-lah she had just refilled. It was about the same size as the cast-iron planters on the worksheds of low-income's other neighborhood, the top antique versions that salvage shops charge a bundle for and that weigh about 75 pounds—be fore cast-iron plants.

We could totally build cast-iron from this, Sal said. He'd just used the material in a maintenance-free heropost project for ZOH. It's lightweight, won't rot, and holds paint better than wood, he said. Him, and we could get the cast-iron look by gluing appliques onto a cast-iron box and painting it," said a lie.

She began to sketch an idea while Sal reached for some more material.

They made the box by joining the boards with PVC cement and finish nails. Once the cement dried, Allie added the rubber appliques and Sal attached the handles. Then it was time for two coats of spray paint.

Dead reaper for cast iron? Sal said, returning their work. Even to move around, too, Allie said—but came on—I've got two more windows to worry about.



> **Good odds:** not as strong as heavy the PVC sides together with the cement cures.



> **Length of molding:** cut with the roller saw than the tape-cut bottom of the planter.



> **When they were:** I'd be working to spray each other the team coated the planter with black paint. A second coat, with a textured brown paint, gave the box a shaggy, natural look.

Speed cart

THE TEAM
Nate Stanton
Publisher
Lyndsey Norton
Senior Account
Manager

THEIR STUFF

- clip on pipe fittings and aluminum tubing (Homedepot.com)
- casters (Homedepot.com)
- oak boards
- workbench top (Homedepot.com)
- external cut

THEIR SOLUTION

Turn aluminum tubing and fittings into a bartending kitchen cart

Lyndsey looked at the aluminum tubes and fittings poking up from the box of parts in her HOY Deno kit and felt pumped. Note:

"At seven words, it's gonna be like building with Tinkertoys," she said. "But what should it be?" The slatwork steel color and a new bar workbench top made it click. "A rolling island," Lyndsey said.

They cut the aluminum tubes to length and joined them with fittings and elbow tees. With the frame built, they added slats below for bulk storage, the beefy maple work surface above, and an external rack to keep frequently used pans handy.

Standing back and admiring their work, Nate said, "Not bad for the kitchen, but these wheels mean we can roll it right outside for backyard cocktail time." As for the island, it clearly took to



► A bar key and special fittings lock the tubing together at the corners.



► A generous 3-by-8-foot maple workbench top will withstand plenty of abuse and can be sandblasted to remove any knife cuts or burn marks.



► A coat of food-grade mineral oil helps prevent the top from cracking.



"The island came together like child's play, but the wine is strictly grown-up."

Nate Stanton
Publisher

Lyndsey Norton
Senior Account Manager

A coat of food-grade mineral oil will help prevent the top from cracking.

Smiling in the rain

THE TEAM
Bob Newman
Creative Director
Jay
Bob's daughter

THEIR STUFF
► plywood
► concrete
► concrete mixer
► exterior dye
► glue stick

THEIR SOLUTION
Use concrete to make an umbrella stand that looks like wood.

As soon as her dad, Bob, told her the tub of concrete they were given molds like day 12-year-old Jay started taking up her saws.

Bob had worked with concrete in the past and knew the material could be molded. "If we make a form from disassembled plywood, it will give the concrete shape and support the grain," he said. Jay was into that but still wanted to know what to make. "Leave it to me," said Bob, who proceeded to look for a circular saw.

Bob cut strips of plywood for the sides, and Jay scrubbed out the primed 2x4s in blue before screwing the parts together to create

the form. After mixing up a batch of concrete, Jay—with a whole lot of glue—used it to pack the walls of the form. Once it cured, they applied a concrete dye.

"Who knew you could use concrete like clay?" Jay said. "Who knew I could track you into making an umbrella stand now can clean up the front hall?" Bob answered back, with a grin.



► The sides of the form, made from rough exterior-grade sheathing, support the grain while the concrete is in place.



► The concrete is fiber-reinforced to minimize cracking. The loose-packed 2x4s onto the walls a handful at a time until the sides were about 1/2 inch thick.



► Paint would have obscured the wood-grain detail, so the form sides were white-painted, concrete dye.

Bob Newman
Creative Director

"With a bit of water, gray concrete powder became a rock-hard umbrella stand that won't mind getting a little wet."



by
Chris H. Brown

Can you do better? Prove it!

We want to see what you can create using scraps left over from past projects. Build it, shoot it, then share it with us on social media using #DIYDARE. (Or, if you prefer, e-mail photos to us at DIYDare@theoldhouse.com.) Our favorites will appear in This Old House magazine.



Concrete doesn't come in solid color, so Jay used a white paint to make the concrete look like wood grain. Jay used a white paint to make the concrete look like wood grain. Jay used a white paint to make the concrete look like wood grain.



COZY COTTAGE REDO

A first-time homeowner
revives a neglected
1928 bungalow with
patience, perseverance,
and a little help from
her skilled friends

By Helen Thompson
Photographs by Casey Dunn
Produced by Tisha Leung
Styling by Ann Edgerton



After living, room-to-room in her bungalow for 10 years, the owner decided to renovate the entire house. The project was a labor of love, with the owner and her friends working together to bring the house back to its original glory. The renovation was a challenge, but the owner's patience and perseverance paid off. The final result is a beautiful, cozy cottage that is a true reflection of the owner's personality.



Buying a first house is a personal landmark that often signals the beginning of adulthood. But at 26, Brenna Byrnes didn't have homeownership on her mind when she came upon the small stone house that she would claim as her own. In fact, she decided in a split second to take the major domestic step. Despite that sudden start, nothing she as her homeowner says would ever last.

This was 18 years ago, an arrangement that suited everyone—though she worried that her two music pages were making out their welcome. One night, late one night, she made a move. “I was riding my bike through the neighborhood when I noticed a FOR SALE sign,” explains Brenna, a restaurant manager. She wasn’t planning to buy, but taking in the exterior and the rustic exterior that reminded her of the Little Texas Hill Country houses that she loved, “I had a flash that this was the right place for me,” she says now. The 1,250-square-foot stone structure stood out from

ABOVE: The window on the right wall has been replaced with a 32-inch high double-hung window and flanked a pair of tall pots to bring in more light. Along: Brenna Pro Refrigerator and Food Storage Products. Photo: The Austin Chronicle

ABOVE: The weather and dryer now stand in this corner of the kitchen, now used more efficiently for storage space. The wheelbarrow contribution is staying here for dishes and in the dining room. Photo: The Austin Chronicle



floor plan

Before the redo, the 1,250-square-foot, two-bedroom house included a master bedroom that could be reached only by going through the bathroom from the living room. With the remodel, the kitchen and dining room remained in place, while the living room and front bedroom swapped places. The result: The relocated bedroom has immediate access to the bath, which gained a few precious inches from the former master bedroom, now the office/guest room.



ABOVE: The six-light French doors are original to the house. The display boards were discovered as a result of the renovation. Photo: The Austin Chronicle

1,000. The green sectional became the focal point of the room as it sits on the side with her, while long legs nearby. She coffee table up. Photo: The Austin Chronicle

Shop TOM
For more on this house, visit
The TOM Show at
tomshow.com
TOM/AGE 2024

the other houses on the street in East Austin, a neighborhood of once-great Victorian-era homes that had been largely abandoned by artists, writers, and young professionals.

The house's quirky charm drew Brenna from its structural challenges. A front porch cut into the living room suggested a place to lay a table on the porch's right side led to a room that was being used as a bedroom but would be well suited to serve as the living room, with the dining room and kitchen lined up behind it. On the back wall of the porch, another door opened onto the designated living room, a bathroom connected it to the master bedroom. Its redwooden handrail that the bedroom had been tucked in at some point.

Brenna loved what she saw, even if there were aesthetic shocks, too. “The walls and the ceilings were covered in this terrible peepoo stains,” she says. Other issues surprised the owners, and that’s



when Brenna called on architect Rebecca Devine, a member of her soccer team. "There wasn't a lot of inherent value in the structure," says Devine. The inspector's report sounded dire, too. "He noted the bad addition, that the house needed new wiring and plumbing, the roof was dodgy, and the entire water was leaking," she adds. Despite the firm, 9-floor ceilings, stately stone columns, glass-fronted French doors, and a built-in dining room built encouraged the newbie home buyer. Brenna bought the house, optimistically ignoring the holes in the kitchen floor that gaped to reveal dirt below.

In the meantime, contractor David Wilcox—also a soccer player who had served on coed teams with Devine—began work on an addition to Brenna's parents' house. Talk naturally turned to the improvements needed at their daughter's house. Then the economy tanked and everything was put on hold.

Five years on, with the economy picking up, the time was finally right to start work on the kitchen. Wilcox's biggest task: to stabilize the 13-foot by 45-foot cook space. "My concern," he says, "was how well the house was framed." The reality presented

by the noted cedar post foundation was scary.

But Brenna was all in at this point, and not a hour to spare her back on the brick house. The foundation concerns did not say hopes the bed for a second-floor master suite, however—which was okay with her. After living in the house, Brenna realized, "I really only used three rooms, so I decided to keep the house the size it was."

Wilcox proceeded, shoring up the shaky structure with 12 concrete piers. He also ripped up the kitchen floor to add a subfloor. "We could only save part of the floor," he says, as he found reclaimed longleaf pine from an outside source and rooted in pieces he could salvage from the original floor. New electrical replaced outdated clock wiring, and all the plumbing was replaced with PVC. Double-pane low-e windows and spray-foam insulation in the attic and in the walls weatherproofed the house.

A bonus? "Even though we were just doing the kitchen," says Wilcox, "it affected as much as 20 to 30 percent of the rest of the house because we upgraded systems and the foundation."

As a suspected complication to the renovation arose when Devine moved to New York and had to bow out of the project. So Wilcox enlisted Austin architect Steve Barnish to work on the plans so alongside the glassless spaces on the left side of the house. Just getting to the bedroom on the back was a task. The only existing route was via the former living room and through the bath.

The changes were organized along a sleek hallway that slices from the front bedroom (the former living room) to the office/guest room (the former master bedroom). Shallow closets on each bedroom were closed off to merge them into a walk-in closet accessible from the hallway. Then the bathroom was reconfigured so that it opens onto the hall across from the closet, a vast improvement over its former

The bedrooms—with a view onto the front porch—are furnished with mid-century style pieces such as the chest of drawers. Brenna identified these her grandmother. A vintage sewing machine (also serves as a nightstand). The bent chair and stool track match those in the office/guest room at the back of the house (and pink and white rug had passed West Co.

double life as passageway to the back bedroom. Brenna, who has now lived in the stone cottage for a decade, has no regrets about a result that was a long time coming. She's been able to furnish the cozy abode slowly with a mix of old pieces and new finds, vintage and modern. "When I bought this house, I didn't know what my style was," she says. "I would have chosen the wrong things."

She especially grinds that she had a good reason to work with. "It's been nice having people who know what I'm like help me." The combination of Brenna's fleet, Devine's support, and Wilcox's willingness has made for a winning outcome. "I understand myself and my home better," says Brenna. "It was worth the wait." ■

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tips, tricks, and
answers to
your home-
improvement
questions

Q I'd like to start an herb garden this year. Can you give some pointers on where to locate it and how to care for it?

—SHEMELCOWETS, STONHAM, MASS.

A Herbs love sun, so find a spot that gets at least 6 hours a day, and provide a compost-rich soil that drains well; they don't like "wet feet." Group them by their watering needs. Rosemary, thyme, and sage, for example, don't mind drier conditions. Basil, chives, and parsley prefer to be kept moist. —SUSANNO

PHOTOGRAPH BY VICTOR SCHAEGER



Our cast of veteran experts



TOM SILVA
General Contractor



NORM ABRAM
Master Carpenter



RICHARD TRETHEWEY
Plumbing and Heating Expert



ROGER COOK
Landscape Contractor



KEVIN O'CONNOR
Host

The stair treads leading up to my deck are starting to split and need to be replaced. What's the best way to do that?

—MARYVLORE, BALTIMORE



Norm Abram uses a marking guide that he built to make every step of a new stair treader exactly the same size. This type of guide works for deck stairs, too.

NORM ABRAM REPLIES: Let's assume that your deck stairs were built to code, with a tread depth of at least 10 inches, a width of at least 36 inches, and no more than 7½ inches from the top of each tread to the top of the next. If not, then your stairway should be rebuilt for safety. But if it is up to code, take an impact driver and remove the old treads from the stringers. Check to see if the structure is in good shape and install new treads, all cut to exactly the same size.

A marking guide like the one I'm using at left will come in handy during the cutting phase of this project. Just measure and transfer the desired length and width to the stringers and screw a brace to one end. Make sure the brace overhangs so that you can hook it over the end of the tread stock. Then use the guide to cut each cut. There's no measuring, so every piece comes out exactly the same.

I can't say for sure why your original treads split, but this commonly occurs when wide pieces of wood are screwed down so tightly that they can't move. You can avoid this problem by using two pieces of narrower stock to form each tread.



Picture roll on plaster
My 1801 Italianate house has soft brick interior walls covered in plaster. How do I fasten a picture rail to these walls without damaging them?

—KEITH LEWIS, GREENSBORO, N.C.

What is it?

1. Seat pad for a lawn tractor

2. Kneeding pad for gardeners

3. Shoulder pads for roofers

4. Vibration isolation pad for washers and dryers

permeable
oil proof

TOM SILVA REPLIES: Don't bother with fasteners. A high quality construction adhesive should do the job very nicely. Make sure it's a high-tack or fast-grab type, like PL Premium Fast Grab Polyurethane (loctiteproducts.com). Without a high-tack adhesive, the rail is likely to sag or fall off soon after you put it in place.

First, check the condition of the plaster where the rail will be installed. If it's not well adhered, scrape it off. Then, using a chalk line, snap a straight line on the wall that's roughly parallel to the ceiling to guide you as you glue the rail in place. Let your eye tell you if the line looks right. Once that's done, you'll probably look out of place if your house has settled at all in the last 145 years.

What do you do with a rusty drainpipe?

The 30-foot cast-iron down that runs under our slab floor is rusted, rough, and eventually clogging. I call a plumber to clear it at least once a year. Does anyone make a sleeve or a coating to make the pipe smooth? I don't want to jackhammer my floors.

—BERRY THOMAS, SILVERDALE, MD



A dried, cracked concrete walkway would look much better if covered with the same flagstone that's on the porch.

Cracked walkway fix
We want to eliminate an unsightly crack in the concrete walkway off our porch and have the repair be in seamless with the existing flagstone porch floor. Any suggestions?

—BENJAMIN, SHARPSBURG, MD

ROGER COOK REPLIES: I'd buy enough matching flagstone to lay an entire walkway over the existing concrete. If the stones are all the same thickness and smooth on at least one face, they could be glued down with an exterior-grade construction adhesive, like the one made by Gorilla Glue (gorillagluce.com). More likely, the stones will have a rough texture and an uneven thickness. In that case, set them in a bed of mortar. Whatever approach you take, the joints between the stones should be filled with mortar.

Before you start, look at how the stones' added thickness will affect the slope of the walkway. As the porch end, the step may have to be rebuilt so that it's between 3 and 7 inches above the new walkway. Anything more or less will be a tripping hazard. You may also need to add a step at the walkway's other end, where it meets the sidewalk.

Once you've figured out the ends, chisel and wack-brush away the loose material around the crack, then scrub the walkway with a power-washer or a brush and a cleaning solution containing TSP or TSP substitute. When the concrete is dry, fill the crack with a polyurethane sealant, such as Quikrete's concrete-crack sealant (quikrete.com). If the crack is more than 1/4 inch wide, press foam backer and trim it before you caulk.

Now the stone-laying begins. If you're building the mosaic in mortar, add an acrylic liner bonding agent like Silaflex II (silaflex.com) to the mix to ensure good adhesion to the concrete. Just be sure not to bridge the crack, or you'll end up with fractured stones as the concrete or other side moves. Instead, create a soft joint by leaving a narrow gap directly above that crack. Hide this joint with backer rod and gray silicone sealant. Unlike other sealants, silicone remains flexible and won't be damaged by the sun. To disguise the sealant, blend in some mortar dust collected from a grout bucket.

If your new walkway runs past a lawn, you can hide an edge by peeling back the turf a few feet and adding enough loam to raise it up even with the stone edge. Just lay the pre-soaked grass back in place and your walkway will look like it's always been there.

The baseboard has got to go

I have to remove about a dozen feet of poorly installed baseboard. Is there a way to get it off without doing a number on the drywall?

—JIM STRONG, ANDOVER, MASS.

What is it?

Knocking pad for gardeners

The Kneeler's soft, closed-cell foam rubber provides a comfortable cushion for any task that involves kneeling. \$40, backyard.com



TOM SILVA REPLIES: That won't be too difficult, if you work methodically and use the right tools: a utility knife, a fairly stiff putty knife, a couple of 6-inch pry bars, and two pry bars. A pair of considerable knuckles will also be a big help.

Use the utility knife to slice through the paint and caulk sealing the horizontal joints between the top of the baseboard and the drywall and between the baseboard and the shoe molding, if there is one, and the vertical joint where a baseboard meets a door casing.

Starting on the door casing, use the pry bars to pry away the shoe molding, then finish the job with a pry bar. Now, back into the baseboarded area into the ceiling, hold a tapping knife against the wall at a set location. If you don't have a set finder and there aren't any obvious imperfections in the wall to show where a stud is, look for a light switch. It will most likely be attached to a stud. The tapping knife will protect the drywall from scrapes and crumbling as you pry off the baseboard, first with the putty knife, then a pry bar.

While a single pry bar has enough leverage to pull the baseboard away from the wall, it's probably not enough to free the

piece completely. To do this, place the second tapping knife at the next stud—the stud in the baseboard should indicate the spot—and use the second pry bar to ease the trim over. Lower that bar in place, then tapping to the next set of nails with the first tapping knife and pry bar. Work both pry bars at the same time, and the end of the baseboard should come free.

Continue prying and tapping, and the baseboard should pop off in one piece without damaging the drywall.

Deer-resistant shade garden for clay soil

I dream of having a lush shade garden filled with deer-tolerant perennials, but our wooded lot has heavy clay soil and many tree roots. Can you make my dream come true?

—HEMANN, DAY, ACCORD, MD

JENNIFER NAWADA REPLIES: Deer. Shade. Clay soil. Each one is a challenge by itself, and you've got all three! That said, it is possible to overcome these conditions by selecting the right plants and taking steps to improve the soil.

Let's start with the plants. Woody shrubs that would persist well in your Zone 7a garden

include witch hazel, forsythia, birchwood, clematis, drooping fraxinosa, arrow-wood viburnum, and cultivated hydrangea. And for perennials to go with the shrubs, consider these tough shade or partial-shade lovers, said to be, bleeding heart, baccharis, foaglova, epimedium, ferns, Japanese forest grass, pulmonaria, and Linop.

All of these are deer-resistant, meaning deer won't feast on them with the same gusto as on harts, hollies, yews, and rhododendrons, which also like shade. But no plant is truly deer proof; they'll eat whatever is within reach when their preferred food sources run low. If deer browsing becomes excessive, you can install a deer netting or apply a repellent such as Deer Scram (deer-scram.com). Both products can be found at your local garden center.

The plants I've listed will also tolerate a wide range of soil types and pH, from slightly acidic to slightly alkaline. But before you head to the nursery, have the soil tested by the local cooperative extension service. The test will show the soil's pH and fertility, and tell you exactly how much of which nutrients or amendments should be added for your new additions to thrive.

As you plant your garden, take care not to disturb the living roots of any tree that you want to keep. A groundcover such as periwinkle, which needs only 3 to 5 inches of soil, would be a good choice to hide close to trees or with lots of surface roots. Where there are fewer roots and you can successfully dig, use a rototiller or a shovel to thoroughly incorporate a 50/50 mixture of compost and coarse—*not fine*—wood chips to the top to improve its density and ability to drain.



Hide screw holes in kitchen cabinets

I want to change the hinges on my cabinets to the concealed type. But how do I cover the screw holes left by the old hinges?

—GENEVE, FRANKLIN, PARADES, NEWFOUNDLAND

TOM SILVA REPLIES: The fix depends on whether your cabinets are painted or stained. If painted, simply fill each hole with a small dab of polyester wood-filling, like the ones made by Bondo (bondo.com) and Minwax (minwax.com). You can also use a hardener into the putty and in about 15 minutes it sets hard enough to sand. Then put primer and paint to re-complex the repair.

Disguising stains in cabinets with a stained finish is more of a challenge. You'll want to use a colored wax pencil, like the Blend-It pens made by Minwax. Find one that matches the shade of your existing finish and rub the pencil's tip back and forth over the hole to fill it with wax. Wipe off the residue around the hole with a clean cloth.

If no pencil's color is a close enough match, try bleeding a few. Start by filling the hole with a slightly lighter shade, then go over it with a darker shade. That'll all three is to try; wax can't be impacted with a clear finish.

Shade-loving plants for heavy clay soil

- astilbe
- beechwood
- viburnum
- brunnera
- Japanese forest grass

For perennials, work on the sand and compost to a depth of at least 6 inches, and plant them in masses of three to seven plants to give them a more substantial impact. Shrubs should be placed to provide a back bone to the garden when the perennials die back in winter.

Match and hand-water each new specimen after planting, and make sure they all get watered regularly during their first growing season to help them become well established in their new home. Have fun developing the garden of your dreams!

Jennifer Nawada is a landscape designer, a certified horticulturist, and the owner of Nawada Landscape Design in Boston. She appears regularly on TV episodes of Ask This Old House.

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THE HISTORY When Senator John "Yotes" died, in 1899, his 11-year-old son, George, was barely old enough to help out on the family farm. But the adult George didn't allow that early misfortune to stand in his way, transforming the small parcel his father left him into a flourishing business that sold produce to markets in Chicago. Around 1920, he and his wife, Sarah, built this sprawling home on the land and eventually had five children. When George died, in 1973, the house was sold outside the family. In 1990, the funds were short when it took the newly built street, including the addition of an impressive two-story porch. Most recently, the house was purchased by a local real-estate agent, who started a restoration. She's now looking to sell it to someone with the time and money to finish the job.

WHY SAVE IT? The refined exterior is accented by a handsome double-height porch with massive Corinthian columns. The interior features a number of original details, including two fireplaces, turned oak spindles, and a stained-glass window in the staircase landing.

WHAT IT NEEDS While the house is structurally sound, it needs some updates to the electrical system and the master bathroom. Logansport is a town of about 10,000, located 75 miles north of Indianapolis. A wide array of historical structures have helped fuel a local economy of the downtown area. Now, locals are hoping that this restoration will inspire someone to restore one of the most lavish houses in town.

—PILL HOPE



Victorian-era gem filled with character



1. The 3,648-square-foot house has four bedrooms and one bathroom and sits on a half-acre lot. A new sewer could finish the basement and allow to add another 2,500 square feet of living space.
2. A landscape reveal and ballustrade were likely added around 1910, when what had been the side of the house was altered to face the newly built street.
3. French doors separate the living and dining rooms.
4. There are two fireplaces in the house, both of which have been converted to use as natural gas.



GOT A HOUSE?

If you know of an old house that should be saved and is for sale, write to us with all the information you can at info@thisoldhouse.com or this Old House, 100 Liberty Street, New York, NY 10038.

PHOTOS: JAMES HAMILTON

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